

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING
CHOICE AMONG ARAB STUDENTS OF
MALAYSIA AS EDUCATIONAL TOURISM
DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the researcher investigates the motivations of Arab educational tourists in Malaysia. This study employs a model entitled “a model of Arab educational tourist motivations” of push and pull factors developed by the researcher to determine the motivations of Arab educational tourists traveling to Malaysia. Data was collected from 424 Arab educational tourists (60.5 percent of the total sample) who are studying at seven academic institutions in Malaysia (UM, UPM, UIAM, UUM, USM, MMU, UNITEL). Factor analysis was conducted to identify tourism motivations and cultural factors of Arab society. Pearson correlation analysis technique was used to find the relationship between push and pull factors of tourism motivations and the relationship between Arab culture and push and pull factors of tourism motivations. Test of differences like T-tests and One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to determine the differences in Arab educational tourists’ motivations according to their demographic factors. Logistic regression was used to find out the influence of tourism motivations, cultural factors and demographic factors of Arab educational tourists on destination choice (Malaysia).

The results of factor analysis in this study identified five push factors and six pull factors. The five push factors (intrinsic desire) extracted were: ‘Escape’, ‘Personal reasons’, ‘Enjoying natural resources’, ‘Adventure and excitement’ and ‘Knowledge’. The six pull factors (attributes of destination) identified were: ‘Cultural and natural attractions’, ‘Cost’, ‘Country image’, ‘Knowledge and awareness’, ‘Social environment’ and ‘Safe environment’.

The factor analysis of cultural items resulted in six underlying domains, 'Individualism', 'Uncertainty avoidance', 'Social interdependence' (collectivism), 'Helping others' (collectivism), 'Family relationship' (collectivism) and 'Inequalities and hierarchy' (power distance). Pearson correlation analysis technique found significant correlations between the majority of push and pull factors. Pearson correlation also found significant correlations between tourism motivations and cultural factors in most factors.

The findings of ANOVA and T-tests revealed significant differences in Arab educational tourists' motivations traveling to Malaysia according to their demographic factors. The results of logistic regression test revealed that one of the five push factors 'Knowledge' was found to be significant, whereas the other factors were not critical determinants in choosing the destination. Besides, this study found that five pull factors, 'Social environment', 'Country image', 'Cultural and natural attractions', 'Cost' and 'Safe environment' have a significant influence on destination choice. Regarding the cultural factors, 'Helping others' (collectivism), 'Family relationship' (collectivism) and 'Inequalities and hierarchy' (power distance) were found to have a significant influence on the destination choice, while the rest three factors were not significant in the selection of the destination. For demographic factors, one factor 'Educational level' was found to have a significant influence on destination choice. The other factors, 'Age', 'Gender', 'Marital status' and 'Income level' were not significant in choosing the travel destination (Malaysia).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study background, theoretical framework, problem statement, objectives of the study, scope of the study and definition of key terms used in this study. These are followed with discussion on the contribution of this study. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion on organization of remaining chapters.

1.2 Background of the Study

For many communities and countries all over the world, tourism is the most important industry. Tourism is an integral part of several economies of the world. The travel and tourism sector generates more than 230 million jobs and contributes billions of dollars, collectively, to the economies of countries across the world. As tourism can bring in income, employment, tax revenue and foreign exchange earnings, many countries are in competition to attract foreign tourists.

The globe currently encompasses a period of accelerating diversity and multicultural experience. Globalization, educational tourism and international student growth have brought about the need for a better understanding of the social and economic wealth of the tertiary education cross-cultural experience (Townsend & Lee, 2004).

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